

find the new Doctor speaking of “*claviculæ avium, quæ etiam ossa coracoidea nominari solent* ;” for we had thought it was now universally recognized that in birds the furcula, and not the coracoids, represented the clavicles. The author gives a list of the species (115 in number) whose sternums he has closely examined. A large proportion of them are American, and among them we find that not at all common bird *Ictinia mississippiensis* ; but there is a great lack of the forms which deviate most from the ordinary rule, such, for instance, as occur among the *Picariæ* and *Grallæ* ; and it is probably from this cause that Dr. Dieck abstains from stating what his views are on the general classification of birds.

5. AMERICAN.

Mr. Lawrence in the ‘Annals’ of the New York Lyceum for December last, describes as new six species of Birds—*Hirundo æquatorialis* from Ecuador, *Thamnophilus leucopygus* and *Empidonax pectoralis* from the Isthmus of Panama, and three Humming-birds. To Mr. Gould we are indebted for the information that he has received from Mr. Lawrence the types of these last, that *Heliodoxa henryi* is identical with *H. jacula*, that *Thaumatias viridicaudus* is the female of *Chrysuronia humboldti*, and that *Amazilia (Pyrrhophæna) graysoni* differs only in size from *P. cinnamomea*.

In our notice in the last ‘Ibis’ of Dr. Coues’s paper on the ornithology of Arizona (*suprà*, pp. 130, 131) we omitted to mention, as we ought to have done, that the bird referred with doubt by that gentleman in our own pages (Ibis, 1865, p. 164) to *Vireo solitarius* is his new *V. plumbeus*, and that spoken of by him in the same interesting article (p. 165) as being either *Melospiza melodia* or *M. heermanni* proves to be *M. fallax*.

XV.—Letters, Announcements, &c.

THE following letters, addressed “To the Editor of ‘The Ibis,’” have been received :—

Kustendjie, Bulgaria, 1866.

SIR,—The claims of *Aquila nævioides* to a place among the birds of Europe have several times been urged in ‘The Ibis.’

My observations have convinced me that it is a permanent resident in this neighbourhood. I have now a living example of this species, taken from the nest more than two years ago. In 1865 several were noticed soaring over a large ravine in a locality some twenty miles distant from the scene of the former capture; and though an egg was found which agreed exactly with Dr. Bree's figure, it could not be authenticated and was left. In April last we were fortunate enough to secure three eggs in this same locality, the bird being shot. Some ten or twelve more were seen; but time did not allow of a longer search.

On the 5th of June, 1866, an example of *Larus minutus* was shot here as it was rising from the nest; and under it was found an egg, which I am forwarding to you. This I believe to be a most interesting specimen.

I am, &c.,

W. H. CULLEN.

Anchnaba House, Lochgilphead,
18th December, 1866.

SIR,—When corresponding with Mr. A. G. More as to the occurrence of different birds in Argyleshire, I believe that I mentioned the Turtle-Dove (*Turtur auritus*) as one which I had little doubt I had seen, though not obtained. This belief is now strengthened by the fact that my father's keeper shot one last October, not far from the same locality. This may be interesting to some readers of 'The Ibis.'

I am, &c.,

J. W. P. ORDE.

Cape Town, 10th January, 1867.

SIR,—On my leaving England in November last I promised you that I would do all in my power to clear up the mystery of the St. Helena "Wire-bird," and I have now the pleasure of sending you a male and female shot by myself, with such an account of their habits as I could glean either by personal observation or by report from the residents on the island.

I have little to record of ornithological lore during our voyage. We left Southampton on the 8th of November in rather bad weather, and few of our usual coast-birds were about. Plymouth was left on the 10th, and we next sighted the Spanish coast about Finisterra in moderate weather; here we fell in with flocks of Guillemots (*Uria troile*) and Little Auks (*Mergulus alle*), the latter chiefly in pairs. We saw no more birds thence to the Canary Islands, off which we saw Terns and Gannets; the latter were, I think, *Sula melanops**.

Our next visitor surprised me. In lat. $3^{\circ} 2' N.$, long. $10^{\circ} 47' W.$, a "Cape Pigeon" (*Daption capensis*) accompanied the ship for some distance. I have never seen this bird so far north in any of my voyages; and so said Captain Dickson and the officers of the ship. In lat. $1^{\circ} 35' S.$, long. $9^{\circ} 15' W.$, a flock of *Onychoprion fuliginosus* passed us early in the morning. On the 2nd of December, lat. $4^{\circ} 21' S.$, long. $8^{\circ} 25' W.$, a Frigate-bird hovered for a short time over our mast, and a "school" of porpoises gambolled below. These are all the birds we saw till we made St. Helena, except when running into St. Vincent's (Cape Verde Islands) on the 22nd, when, of course, a few Terns were present. I have never seen a Gull there, which surprises me. The island was looking green and, for St. Vincent's, lovely. To my great vexation we were put in quarantine, because we had not a clean bill of health from Portsmouth. I had promised myself a little Quail-shooting and some specimens of *Passer jagoensis*, but could only "look and long." The consul told me Quail were more plentiful than he had ever known them, and his son had that morning shot five brace, close to his house, which we could see most invitingly from the ship. An Osprey flew over us as we lay at anchor. I have never been in here without seeing several of these fine fish-hawks. *Neophron percnopterus* did not seem so abundant as on my first visit twelve years ago; perhaps the increase of the town has scared them.

We landed at St. Helena on the morning of the 6th of December. I had written by a previous mail to my friend Mr. Mellis, begging him to have horses ready to enable me to reach the spot where the "Wire-birds" lived; and as soon as

* [Qu. *S. melanura*?—ED.]

we anchored I received a note from him, telling me all was prepared and that I must go to a place near his residence, called New-ground, on which he had the day before seen some birds. Finding that it was only two miles off, I determined to walk, rather than ride, in the hope of picking up some other birds; and just as I reached the top of the celebrated Ladder, by the carriage road, Mr. Mellis himself appeared on horseback coming to pilot me to the spot. Ten minutes walk brought us to as desolate and barren a scene as any one could desire—a plateau of arid burnt-up scoria, rent by fearful ravines, in which a few *Cacti* struggled for existence. Here and there an *Asclepias* looked green and inviting to the miserable goats, and was frequented by little bands of a red butterfly, *Danais chrysippus*, and the ubiquitous *Cynthia cardui*. Now and then a little flock of the Australian *Geopelia tranquilla* rose and flew before us, or a Java Sparrow or Cape Waxbill (all introductions) chattered on the stunted vegetation.

As we surmounted the crest of a ravine, on to the plain called the New-ground, a bird, which I took to be *Ægialites pecuarius*, rose a little ahead of us, and, when too far for a shot, Mr. Mellis exclaimed “that is a Wire-bird!” I confess at the moment I was disappointed. I had made up my mind to find it a Plover of some kind, and at one time half fancied, from the descriptions, it was a small Stilt-Plover; but I hardly thought it could be my old friend *Æ. pecuarius*. However, as the bird flew on, it struck me it was larger than that bird, and differently marked, and my hopes rose again. Mr. Mellis meanwhile detected another on the ground, which I stalked for some time; but it kept continually running at a great pace about eighty yards from me, and would not let me approach nearer. At length I fired and it fell, but rose again, flew a little, and finally disappeared, badly wounded, over the edge of a ravine.

The report of my gun raised several others, and after stalking first one and then another, I concealed myself behind a cactus, and Mr. Mellis put one up at a distance and drove it towards me. It came within easy range, and a half charge of No. 10 shot made the prize my own; and it was with much delight that I

found I had a bird with which I was not acquainted, though closely resembling several of the small *Charadriidæ* common in various places.

While sitting on the ground arranging the feathers of my bird, and wondering what it could find to eat in such barren spots, I detected some odd-looking excrescences on the blocks of scoria about us, and a closer examination showed these to be small shells of the genus *Succinea*. These, together with *Coleoptera*, form, as I discovered by their stomachs, their chief food. A little stalking and dodging procured me four more specimens, and I returned to the steamer well satisfied with my day's work.

Mr. Mellis informs me that they lay three or four eggs, of a pale colour (whitish) dotted with black, in the centre of a mass of cow-dung, making no nest, that they remain in the island throughout the year, and frequent open plains—water seemed no attraction to them. They are called "Wire-birds," from the fact that their legs are long and thin. I suppose they appear absurdly so to the aborigines of the island, who have so few birds to look at.

On comparing my specimens with *C. pecuarius*, Temm., I find them to be larger every way, and to be lighter on the breast and belly. They come, however, very close*.

On the 11th December, lat. 28° 23' S., long. 0° 20' E., at nightfall, we passed a flock of "Cape Hens," (*Procellaria æquinoctialis*) roosting on the water: these were the first we

* [Mr. G. R. Gray has most kindly given us his valuable assistance in the determination of the specimens sent us by Mr. Layard. The species appears to correspond accurately with that described and figured by Temminck as *Charadrius pecuarius* (Pl. Col. 183), the type of which is said to have come from the Cape of Good Hope. A smaller species, however, seems to have usurped the name bestowed by that naturalist, and to have been confounded with the true *Æ. pecuarius* by the majority of authors. This we believe to be the *Æ. kittlitzi* of Prof. Reichenbach (Synopsis. Avium, tab. cv. fig. 1063). It would seem to be not uncommon at the Cape, where we should presume that the true *Æ. pecuarius* is rare, from the fact of its being previously unknown to an ornithologist with so much experience as Mr. Layard—if, indeed, it ever does occur there; for the localities assigned by Temminck are not, as a rule, to be entirely trusted.]

had seen. Next day the little yellow-footed Wilson's Petrel (*Thalassidroma wilsoni*) hovered astern throughout the whole day; and on the 14th, in lat. $32^{\circ} 55'$ S., long. $9^{\circ} 47'$ E., our first Albatros (*Diomedea exulans*) appeared. From this till our arrival at the Cape, birds were continually in sight; but it was not until we made the land that any quantity appeared.

I send you, in addition to the skins, the sternums of both, and a pair of the little *Succinea* on which they feed. Mr. Mellis has promised to procure the eggs; and any further information on their habits which he can get shall be sent to you. Dissection showed that the birds were not breeding.

I am, &c.,

E. L. LAYARD.

Newcastle-on-Tyne, 14th March, 1867.

SIR,—In 1838 I sent to the 'Annals of Natural History' (vol. ii. p. 310) a notice of a small Wren which I had shot at Hartley in the September of that year, and which I identified with the *Regulus modestus* of Mr. Gould's 'Birds of Europe;' but I now find my bird to be distinct from the species there described and figured. The Rev. H. B. Tristram has kindly favoured me with a view of a series of specimens of both species. The one is distinguishable from the other chiefly by a broad belt of pale yellow across the rump; and that gentleman informs me that the species so characterized was described by Pallas under the name of *Motacilla proregulus*. The other is given by Gmelin under the denomination of *M. superciliosa*. Now my specimen has no such belt as I have mentioned across the rump, while that figured by Mr. Gould possesses this character. My bird therefore must stand as *Reguloides superciliosus* (Gmel.),

Æ. kittlitzi differs from *Æ. pecuarius* chiefly, but remarkably, in size. Mr. Gray has been good enough to show us a sufficiently large series of both species, and we do not think any reasonable doubt can be entertained as to their distinctness. Specimens of the true *Æ. pecuarius* from St. Helena, sent under the local name of "Wire-bird," were already in the British Museum. They agree exactly with Mr. Layard's examples.—ED.]

while the specific name *modestus* will have to drop into a synonym of *Reguloides proregulus* (Pall.)*.

A fine mature male example of the Black Kite, *Milvus migrans* (Bodd. 1783) (*Falco ater*, Gmel. 1788), came into my possession in a fresh state on the 11th of May, 1866. It was taken in a trap by Mr. F. Fulger, the Duke of Northumberland's game-keeper, a few days before, in the Red Deer park at Alnwick. This is, I believe, the first time that this fine rapacious bird has occurred in Britain. The plumage was in very good condition, except on the lower part of the body (where it had sustained some injury from the trap), and agrees with that of mature specimens in my collection, which I received from the continent some years ago. It was proved by dissection to be a male.

On the 15th of February last I saw a fine specimen in a fresh state of a mature Ivory-Gull (*Larus eburneus*, Phipps). It was obtained by Mr. E. Crawshay a day or two before, at Islay, on the west coast of Scotland. The bird was in very poor condition and had no appearance of having been shot.

I am, &c.,

JOHN HANCOCK.

* [Mr. Swinhoe had already shown (P. Z. S. 1863, p. 297) the distinctness of *R. superciliosus* and *R. proregulus*, which had been thought (Journ. f. Orn. 1853, pp. 81-96, taf. i., and 'Ibis' 1862, pp. 53-57) to be synonymous; but he was not aware that the *Regulus modestus* of Mr. Hancock's former notice and the *Regulus modestus* of Mr. Gould were specifically different. He rightly identified Mr. Hancock's specimen with *R. superciliosus*, but quoted "*Regulus modestus*, Gould," as a synonym, under the impression, which, we believe, has hitherto generally prevailed, that the bird shot in Northumberland and that obtained in Dalmatia were specifically identical. We have no doubt that our correspondent, Mr. Hancock, is right in what he now says; and the common English name of "Dalmatian Regulus" ought to give place to that of "Yellow-browed Warbler," bestowed by Latham in 1783. It remains to be proved to which of the two species the numerous examples met with by Mr. Gätke in Heligoland belong: those obtained near Berlin, to judge from the plate given by Dr. Cabanis (J. f. O. 1853, *ut supr.*), doubtless pertain to *R. superciliosus*.—ED.]

23rd March, 1867.

SIR,—It is well known that in both species of the genus *Gypaetus* the sclerotic coat of the eye is visible, forming a brilliant orange-red ring encircling the iris.

I have been under the impression that no raptorial birds except the *Gypaeti* exhibited this peculiarity; but on examining to-day the fine immature specimen of *Cathartes californianus* now in the gardens of the Zoological Society, I have observed a similar formation of the eye in that Vulture, with the exception of the sclerotic coat being only visible round the posterior portion of the eye, thus forming a semicircle instead of a complete circle as in the *Gypaeti*. In the Californian Vulture at the Gardens the sclerotic coat is of the same orange-red hue as that of the *Gypaeti*, the colour of the iris being dark brown.

J. H. GURNEY.

Zoological Society of London,
11 Hanover Square, London, W.
March 25, 1867.

SIR,—By a communication from my friend Mr. Otto Finsch of Bremen, I learn, what I had previously suspected to be the case, that *Gallinula pumila*, described and figured by me (Ibis 1859, p. 249, pl. vii.), is the same as *G. angulata*, Sundevall (Œf. K. V.-Ak. Förhandl. 1850, p. 110; Schlegel, Mus. P.-B. Ralli, p. 49). Dr. Hartlaub's *G. minor* (Journ. f. Orn. 1860, p. 341) is another synonym of the same species. This rectification of synonymy may be useful to Mr. Layard, whose work on the birds of South Africa we are all anxiously expecting.

Your obedient Servant,

P. L. SCLATER.

During the past few weeks Professor Huxley has been giving, in the theatre of the Royal College of Surgeons, a course of lectures of remarkable interest to ornithologists. The subject has been the *Sauropsida*, or that group of Vertebrates which contains the classes *Reptilia* and *Aves*. We must express our extreme gratification that a Comparative Anatomist of the first

rank should at last have deigned to study birds with the view of assisting special ornithologists in their labours as regards classification; for we recently had to lament the small amount of light thrown on this subject by another high authority. Ornithologists have been very much abused, or at least ridiculed, by some other classes of naturalists for the many very trivial characters on which weight is laid in the systems most in vogue—but, we think, unfairly so. Surely it has been the business of comparative anatomists (the men who are spoken of as having “large views”) to put special ornithologists in the way of knowing better, particularly by pointing out the most essential characters in the osteology of birds. Now we have hitherto been almost entirely devoid of such assistance, though we must not pass over the well-meant efforts of MM. Lherminier and Blanchard, or even of De Blainville and a few others. The great Cuvier himself, as Prof. Huxley well remarked, never seems to have exerted his mind on the class *Aves* as he did on other animals; and his example has been imitated by nearly all his followers. We hope that a better time is in store for us, and that things will be placed on a surer foundation by the publication of Prof. Huxley’s researches, which he is about to communicate in a more complete form to the Zoological Society. This being the case, we abstain from giving here any abstract of the results which he has made known; but in due course of time we shall, no doubt, have to announce them to our readers.

Naturalists are pretty well agreed as to the propriety of designating a species by the name under which a description of it was first published; but the question what constitutes “publication” seems, although several times discussed, never to have been settled; for the rule of the British Association on this point is deemed too arbitrary by many persons. A case has lately occurred in which some definite decision must be arrived at. At the meeting of the Zoological Society on the 28th of February last was read a paper by our contributor Mr. E. P. Ramsay, describing a new bird under the name of *Pardalotus leadbeateri*. The March number of ‘The Annals and Magazine of Natural History’ contains a description of the same species by Prof.

McCoy, under the name of *Pardalotus xanthopygus*. Which of these names must be considered entitled to priority? We shall be glad if any naturalists who have paid attention to the difficult subject of nomenclature will favour us with their opinions on the subject.

Mr. Robert Gray, of Glasgow, has in preparation an illustrated work on the birds of the west of Scotland, including the Outer Hebrides, a district respecting the ornithology of which very little is as yet known. From this gentleman's intimate personal acquaintance with the subject, we cannot doubt but the book will contain an abundance of interesting information, and be very acceptable to naturalists in general.

It is fortunately some time since we have had to record the loss of any of our fellow workers; but now we regret to say we have received intelligence of the deaths of three ornithologists to whose labours our science is much indebted. Dr. LÉOTAUD of Trinidad, whose recent work on the birds of that island was the subject of some valuable remarks by Mr. Selater in our last Number, is the first. The second is our friend Dr. HENRY BRYANT of Boston, who died, we understand, during the winter in the West Indies, whither he had been for some years in the habit of going for the sake of his health. His loss is deeply regretted by all who knew him, and by none more than his fellow citizens and the members of the Boston Natural History Society, to whom he had munificently presented the entire collection of the late Baron Lafresnaye, which he had recently purchased at a very large price. The third is our own countryman Mr. PRIDEAUX JOHN SELBY, whose 'Illustrations of British Ornithology' and various other scientific works gave him a just claim to the gratitude of all votaries of the study, though for some years past he had taken no active part in its prosecution. He died at Twizell House, his beautiful seat in Northumberland, on the 28th of March in the eighty-seventh year of his age.